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ABSTRACT

The Women's Employment Network (WEN) is a college-based program funded by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) that provides job search and placement assistance to an average of 130 low-income women each year. Program components include an intensive job-search class, which assists participants in assessing their work skills, values, and interests; evaluating the local labor market; and using innovative job search techniques. In addition, the program uses an array of cognitive behavioral techniques, including automatic thought stopping, reinstatement of past reinforcers, increased socialization, graded task fulfillment, cognitive rehearsal, reinforcement of positive affect and behavior, and time management. WEN operates through a performance-based contract between the Seattle King County Private Industry Council (PIC) and South Seattle Community College (SSCC). The college underwrites the program's staffing and supply costs until it has billable earnings based on student enrollment, completion of training, job placement, and job retention. Though JPTA funding fluctuates in response to external forces, the college has benefited from and received regional recognition for the WEN program. The experiences of SSCC suggest that the success of a JTPA/community college partnership rests on the responsiveness of program staff in meeting the changing needs of both the community college and the local PIC. (AJL)

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ROUNDTABLE TALK - WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT NETWORK
A JTPA/COMMUNITY COLLEGE SUCCESS STORY

Women's Employment Network
South Seattle Community College, Seattle, WA
Kim Manderbach, Director
Mary Gentry, Assistant Director

Presented at
American Association of Community and Junior Colleges 68th Annual Convention
Las Vegas, Nevada, April 25, 1988
by
Kim Manderbach
Mary Gentry

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Introduction
Presenter: Kim Manderbach

Welcome to the roundtable session on the Women's Employment Network (WEN), a Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funded job search training program at South Seattle Community College. Mary Gentry, WEN's Assistant Director, and I will be presenting information about our job search curriculum, the program design of our performance based contract, and our working relationship with the community college and the employment community in Seattle.

Program Description
Presenter: Mary Gentry

The Women's Employment Network is a college based job search program funded by JTPA. The purpose of the program is to provide job search and placement assistance to low income women. Service components include a 2½ week intensive job search class and 90 day placement assistance. Approximately 130 women are served annually with a staff of 5 administering services. Clients reflect a broad range of age, race and life experiences. Traditional job search techniques are taught through a multi-dimensional approach, with presentation style varying from classroom lecture to group interaction and experiential learning.

The course assists participants in assessing themselves for work skills, values and interests; evaluating the local labor market and the type of job sought; and effectively promoting and marketing themselves through innovative job search techniques. Additionally, a component on motivation and self-esteem completes the course. Students learn stress reduction techniques for dealing with anxiety and the discouragement related to job search; they keep journals that document the daily work of job search; and an index of self-esteem is given before and after class to inform students and staff of confidence and motivation levels.

In addition, the program utilizes an array of cognitive behavioral techniques (developed by Aaron Beck, based on his work with depressed patients.)

Beck, Aaron T., M. D., "Cognitive Therapy," Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry/IV, Vol. 2, Fourth Edition, 1985.

Techniques include:

* Automatic Thought Stopping - a technique that identifies and stops a negative stream of thoughts. Once a student has mastered thought stopping, she learns to replace negative thoughts with positive ones.

* Reinstatement of Past Reinforcers - a tool to help students identify and become involved in past pleasures.

* Increased Socialization - an array of techniques that assist students in broadening social contacts and networking skills. Key to effective communication and the successful job search is assertiveness training.

* Graded Task Fulfillment - a tool for effective mastery of complex tasks. Graded task fulfillment involves setting realistic goals and developing strategies for meeting them by breaking tasks into small, manageable steps.

* Cognitive Rehearsal - a technique for anticipating an upcoming event or interaction, i.e., interview, negotiating higher pay, etc. Creative visualization is a tool for scripting a desired outcome.

* Reinforcement of positive affect and behavior.

* Time Management - techniques that ensure effective planning and timely task fulfillment.

WEN curriculum is broadbased, but at the same time concrete and specific. Students have assignments and are highly accountable to staff. The class structure, the supportive and stimulating environment of trust and normalizing of past experience, the curriculum layout and execution —- all work to produce student confidence, motivation and an ability to succeed in the job market. To that end, WEN was the subject of a research study that examined effective coping skills and styles of unemployed persons. According to the findings from this University of Washington Graduate School of Social Work study:

"WEN eliminates stress on unemployed women. It teaches participants to form a game plan, to reframe the job search as a normal transition."

Jobs Training Partnership Act/Community College Partnership

Presenter: Kim Manderbach

The Women's Employment Network is a performance based contract between the Seattle King County Private Industry Council, overseer of the delivery of JTPA funds, and our community college. Performance based contracting specifies that the amount of JTPA grant income received by our program be determined by our ability to meet negotiated, pre-set goals for the number of participants

enrolled in our program, their placement in unsubsidized jobs, and their retention on the job.

In the beginning of each grant year, the community college financially supports the program's staffing and supply costs until we have billable earnings based on the performance of our students. Our earnings from our funder are divided into sequential payment points based on a participant's progression through our program. We receive a payment when a student enrolls, when they complete training, a third upon placement in a job, with a bonus for a high wage per hour. The final payment occurs if the participant retains her job for thirty or more days.

Each payment point must have supportive written documentation verifying the claim for reimbursement. The payment system is designed so that the better a participant is served by a program, the greater the allowable reimbursement for the cost of training the individual. Each JTPA program submits their proposal for funding independently, so every program is unique in terms of their individual payment points, and the placement and retention percentages they are expected to achieve.

The Women's Employment Network is a job search training program, one of five types of programs receiving federal funding in our Service Delivery Area. Other types of programs include: skills training, on-the-job training, summer youth programs, and English as a second language programs. Community colleges are generally very well suited to hosting JTPA programs, and the relationship between the college and the JTPA program can be mutually beneficial.

Colleges serve to benefit by hosting JTPA programs for the following reasons:

1) JTPA programs introduce a new type of non-traditional student to community college services; one who often has no previous experience in a community college setting.

2) JTPA programs bring increased visibility to the community college through special marketing efforts, media coverage and the development of new alliances in the local business community.

3) JTPA programs often serve as a catalyst program on campuses, linking campus personnel and department resources in meeting the individual JTPA program's needs.

Private Industry Councils (PICs), the funding agencies responsible for contract awarding in each Service Delivery Area, also benefit by contracting with a community college.

1) Community colleges offer supplementary services to the JTPA participant that a smaller non-profit organization may not have. Resources and services include a career planning department, a public information office, and counseling services.

2) Community colleges have well established financial operating procedures offering structure and expertise to the JTPA operator who is responsible for the accountability of federal funds.

3) Community colleges offer JTPA participants centrally located, handicapped accessible classrooms with established transportation routes.

The WEN program's success and regional recognition have come in part from the support services we draw from on our own campus. We offer a good product, an intensive job search curriculum, presented by an enthusiastic, diverse staff. Our strength further lies in our marketing emphasis, and the fact that we run our social service agency like a business, complete with management by objectives.

Early in the WEN program's design, a staff decision was made to establish community linkages and market WEN program services to potential career counseling audiences inclusive of and beyond our own campus. The purpose in expanding program outreach was to enrich our own program and increase visibility in the community.

Community linkages have included:

1) Linkages with 4 year colleges and graduate universities for the purpose of establishing intern programs at our campus and encouraging the exchange of research information on employment topics.

2) The establishment of a speaker bureau for use by our instructors and individuals in the community.

3) The development of an advisory board to offer expertise on marketing, program design and job development.

4) Active involvement and co-sponsoring of job fairs and employment conferences.

Participation in the larger employment and educational community is time consuming, but in the long run, cost effective, if care is taken to see that activities meet multiple program needs in terms of staff training, attracting new clients, and promoting greater respect among employment professionals.

One of the realities we have learned to live with as a JTPA funded program is that we are funded by "soft money" which fluctuates with the external environment. Recently, the Seattle/Puget Sound area has had a decrease in the percentage of reported unemployed individuals; this decrease impacted the amount of dollars our funding office received. Some excellent programs were cut in our region, and established programs like WEN had their funding reduced.

Keeping a JTPA program viable is difficult, but I offer these suggestions based on our own experience:

1) JTPA is not easy money. There is an incredible amount of documentation, report writing, and directives to wade through, and your program is subject to frequent monitoring visits. Staff have to understand this and learn to run the program like a business. There is a strong business emphasis in our program right through our job development. We have staff meetings where we review goals, and we cross-train staff so we can quickly shift staff resources during a grant.

2) It is important to understand the proposal bidding process. Get help from insiders and make it a point to get to know individuals on the PIC Board - make sure they know your successes and see you as a sound, responsible program.

3) Find your niche by studying the bidding categories - some are less competitive. An example is the area of unsolicited proposals.

4) Keep program services flexible within your own college system and establish linkages with other departments on campus.

The final success of a JTPA/community college partnership often rests on the responsiveness of the program staff in meeting the changing needs of both the community college and the local Private Industry Council.

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